DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 512 UD 020 368

AUTHOR Obebe, Bolarinde J.
TITLE Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education: An Educational Task for a Developing Nation.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizenship Education; *Educational Philosophy; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Labor Needs; *Relevance (Education)
IDENTIFIERS *Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Nigeria inherited a British system of education with a British philosophy of education. This educational system no longer meets the needs of an independent Nigeria. Since independence eighteen years ago, the demand for a well defined national policy on education has generated much debate. This debate has led to many Federal and State commissions, all of which have made recommendations that would help to eliminate the strong bias toward the traditional literary and academic subjects. In January, 1977, the Nigerian government issued a policy statement on education which contained the government's views on the philosophy of Nigerian education from preschool through the university levels. The specific national aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are: (1) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; (2) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society; (3) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world; and (4) the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society. (Author/RLV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

FEB 8 7 1980

ED186512

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION:

AN EDUCATIONAL TASK FOR A DEVELOPING NATION

by

Bolarinde J. Obebe

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Bolarinde J. Obebe

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD020368

BOLARINDE J. OBEBE

Bolarinde Obebe, a lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria, is at present on a two-year study leave at Teachers College, Columbia University. He has a B.S. in Education and an M.S. in Curriculum and Instruction. His two-year study leave is to enable him to do his doctoral program in Curriculum and Teaching: Teacher Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, New York, U.S.A. He hopes to return to the Faculty of Education, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria, at the end of his study at Teachers College.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION:
AN EDUCATIONAL TASK FOR A DEVELOPING NATION

Since Nigeria's independence eighteen years ago, the demand for a clearly stated, well-defined national policy on education has generated a lot of debate among educators, journalists and laymen alike. Many commissions were set up by both the Federal and regional (now state) governments. Most of the documents coming out of these commissions focused on the structure and manpower needs of the country in projections. Significant among the many available ones is "The Investment in Education: The Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria."[1] This is popularly known as the Ashby Report, since the chairman was Eric Ashby, a British botanist and a university administrator.

The Commission was appointed by the Federal Minister of Education in 1959 "to conduct an investigation into Nigeria's needs in the field of post-school certificate and Higher Education."[2] Dr. Otonti A. Nduka referred to the report as "the Bible of the Nigerian educational establishment."[3]

Following the Ashby Report, there was a series of other commissions

---

[1] Investment in Education. The Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria. Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria, 1960.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] "Philosophy of Education--A Missing Link in the Academic Training of Nigerian Teachers" in Foundations of African Education: The Drive to Achieve National Unity and Identity, ed. by E.A. Yoloye and S.N. Nwosu, prepared for Western Council of the Association for Teacher Education in Africa (ATEA), 1972.

at the regional level at that time to determine means by which the Commission's recommendations might be implemented in each of the four regions (now nineteen states). Examples were: Western Region Commission Appointed to Review the Educational System of Western Nigeria--The Banjo Commission Report printed by the Government Printer at Ibadan in 1961; The Report on the Review of the Educational System in Eastern Nigeria--The Dike Commission Report, Government Printer at Enugu, 1962, and White Paper on Education Development in Northern Nigeria, Government Printer at Kaduna, 1961.

All these commissions made recommendations in their reports that would help to eliminate the strong bias towards the traditional literary and academic subjects which the Ashby Commission had seen as the major defect of Nigerian education. Banjo's report emphasized practical skills and prevocational training related to the employment opportunities in the vicinity. The rural area was to devote more time on prevocational agriculture for boys, prenursing for girls, and in the city areas, emphasis was put on on electrical activities and engineering for boys and commercial studies for girls. In small towns, typing and bookkeeping were recommended for girls and woodwork and metalwork for boys. The same themes went through other reports, but they were not implemented. Factors responsible for this could be sumamrized as the "fear of the unknown" by the missionaries who were the voluntary agencies at the time and lack of government finances. Since then, the "old" system has continued.

The awareness that our schools were producing graduates "who were well-qualified" for no employable jobs because of the nature of their traditional literary education brings to the public the question on the

government policy on education. The public wants to know what the government is doing to bring about education relevant to Nigerian needs. After eighteen years of independence, there has been no "significant difference," as the researchers would say in publishing their results of studies, in the products from the schools. The school has remained a production line that knows nothing of what becomes of the products that pass through it. There is a need for redirections in educational development. The redirections must be planned, tested and evaluated. There is a need for a philosophy of education. Professor Phil. H. Phenix says a philosophy is any reasonably coherent set of values and fundamental assumptions used as a basis for evaluating educational practice.[4]

Since every society has a "coherent set of values and fundamental assumptions that can be used as a basis for evaluating her educational practice," no country can afford to be without a philosophy of education--Nigeria inclusive. Otherwise, the country's educational system will be like a ship without a rudder drifting and dancing to the tune of the roaring waves on the open sea.

Nigeria inherited a British system of education with a British philosophy of education. The system was good for its day when there was a great demand for "interpreters" for the "Home Government" policies and "file-carriers," whose main function was to carry out the instructions from the colonial masters. That system has been held too long after its days and therefore hampers progress in the field of education when the Nigerians have to make their own decisions in their educational system.

In January 1977, a little over five months after the Universal Primary Education Scheme was launched, the Federal Ministry of Education

4 Phenix, P. H. (ed.) Philosophies of Education John Wiley and Sons, New York. 1961 p. 4.

released Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education. It is a document which contains government's views on the philosophy of Nigerian education, various stages of school systems from pre-primary through primary, secondary and up to the university, including adult and non-formal education, special education, and teacher education. In addition, there are government's statements on educational services, administration, planning and financing of education in Nigeria.

Some of the document's recommendations are so far-reaching that many years will be required in order to put them into effect. Some of them are somehow controversial when one looks at the basic cultural patterns of the country. Perhaps the success or failure (one hopes for success) of the Universal Primary Education will pave the way for trying out many of the recommendations. For such a policy to be given a chance, there is a need for a clear understanding and acceptance on the part of the public. The government is willing to transform all aspects of the nation's life and sees education as a tool for achieving the desired objectives.

A National Education Policy Implementation Task Force has been set up by the government under a one-time minister of education in the "old" western state of Nigeria (now Ogun, Ondo and Oyo states), Prof. Sanya Onabamiro to help

> translate the policy into a 'workable blueprint' which will guide the bodies whose duty it is to implement educational policy, and will also develop a monitoring system of the progress of the planned educational evolution to ensure that infrastructure is prepared and bottlenecks removed in time to facilitate the effective smooth implementation of this National Policy on Education.[5]

---

[5] "Nigeria's Bright Vision of the Future" in West Africa, 25th September, 1978, p. 1881.

In one of his first official comments as the chairman of the Task Force, Prof. Sanya Onabamiro reiterated the brief history behind the growth and development of the policy. The policy came as a product of a seminar organized by the Federal Government in June of 1973 under the chairmanship of Chief S.O. Adebo.[6]

Prof. Onabamiro in an address he delivered at the pre-conference dinenr of the general meeting of the Nigerian Publishers Association enumerated the five national objectives as "the building of free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.[7]

This type of a borad base aim is what John W. Hanson referred to as "the aim to produce a nation that will be both modern and free: no le ser goal will suffice."[8] One is reminded, however, not to place an impossible demand on an educational system that will meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. Prof. Onabamiro's summary of the objectives appears as a paragraph in a country's constitution. The success or failure of a constitution depends on the type of people in government. The success of "a blue print" of an educational policy of a nation equally depends upon the planners, curriculum development specialists, administrators and others that are involved in carrying out the policy

---

[6] "The Five Pillars of Education Policy," Daily Times, July 19, 1978, p. 7.

[7] Ibid.

[8] John W. Hanson, "Educational Tasks for a Nation," in Education and the Development of Nations. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), p. 32.

as laid down by the government. The present National Policy on Education may be seen as an answer to John W. Hanson's call for the need for a comprehensive federal education plan in Nigeria."[9]

The highlights of this National Policy on Education include the first official statement of the government on the philosophy of Nigerian Education which is said to be "based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective and equal educational opportunity for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system."[10] In consequence, the government hopes that the quality of instruction at all levels will be oriented towards the following values:

(1) respect for the worth and dignity of the individuals;

(2) faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;

(3) moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations;

(4) shared responsibility for the common good of society;

(5) respect for the dignity of labour; and

(6) promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.[11]

This sounds like the "Cardinal Principles of 1918" in the American educational system, which were renamed in 1973 as the National Goals of Education in the reform of Secondary Education as reported by the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, under the chairmanship

---

[9] John W. Hanson, "Developing the Plan," in Human Resources and the Wealth of Nations, ed. by Frederick H. Harbison (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 317.

[10] National Policy of Education, p. 4.

[11] Ibid., p. 4.

of B. Frank Brown. The report was published by McGraw Hill Book Co. of New York in 1973.

The Nigerian government wants the philosophy to be in harmony with Nigeria's national objectives, and therefore it "has to be geared towards self-realization, better human relations, individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, national unity, as well as towards social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress."[12] The specific national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked are:

(1) the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

(2) the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;

(3) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; and

(4) the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competences both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.[13]

These are laudable aims and objectives which a developing nation like Nigeria should see as a "coherent set of values and fundamental assumptions" that should be used in evaluating the educational practice as the system progresses. I consider these as a national task and no stone should be left unturned in striving to achieve them. Nigeria is a country of diversity in terms of culture and natural resources. There is a need in maintaining the unity of the nation in the diversity. We gain more by living together as brothers and sisters, for our problems can be tackled with strength and vigor once we can identify them as

---

[12] Ibid., p. 4.

[13] Ibid., p. 4.

common problems that need solutions. The role of education in the development of national awareness and unity cannot be overemphasized. In a nation of well over two hundred ethnic groups, where people with common traits identify with particular groups and speak different languages, there is a need for coming together in spite of all the differences. The role Nigeria is playing in the Assembly of Nations especially on matters that affect the continent of Africa, is building for her an image that she must continue to maintain. A popular slogan during the Civil War of 1967-1970 was "To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done." Even after the guns have been silenced and human miseries forgotten or endured by those who had the direct sad experiences, the slogan is still an appropriate one.

The greatest physical barrier in Nigeria is that created by language. In this National Policy on Education, the government sees the importance of language beyond its place in the educational process. Language is seen "as a means of preserving people's culture," and therefore, "in the interest of national unity, each child is to be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother-tongue. In this connection, the government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba."[14]

On the structure of the educational system, the government considers pre-primary education as an important stage through which an effective and smooth transition from home to the school can be made. It is at this stage that children can be prepared for the primary level of education by

---

[14] Ibid p. 5

providing adequate care and supervision while their parents are at work in their chosen professions. This gives an opportunity for inculcating in the child the social norms of the society and also teaching him good health habits, rudiments of numbers, letters, color, shapes and form, which may be through the play method. Adequate teacher training for this level of education will have to be provided.

The primary stage is seen as a base, and permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively should be encouraged. Character and moral training and ability to adapt to the changing environment should be promoted. The basic tools for further educational advancement, including trades and crafts of the locality must be provided at this stage. Above all, the child must be given citizenship education for effective participation and contribution to the society. The child's curiosity should be developed so as to lay the foundation for scientific and reflective thinking. Since September 1976, the government has introduced Universal Free Primary Education so as to give every child a chance of going to school.

A new structure in the Secondary Education system will come into effect in 1982 when the present first set of Universal Primary Education graduates leave the Primary School. They will have opportunities to go to Secondary School of six-year duration to be given in two stages, a junior secondary education stage and a senior stage. Each stage will be of three-years duration. For the first time, the content of the Secondary School curriculum in Nigeria will take a radical departure from the inherited British system. Opportunities will be provided for vocational as well as academic disciplines. A wide variety of courses will be made

available. For those who are aware of what it entails to bring about this type of change, they have made calls for a smooth transition and a good adaptation in making this three hundred degree turning from the old system.

In areas of higher education, emphasis is on teaching and research and making available any new information coming out of a research to the community. This is very important as many of the researches conducted in many of the Nigerian Higher Institutions have been put on the shelves of the researchers who merely use them for personal advancement. Researches should aim at going beyond satisfying the researchers' individual egos. Results should aim at contributing to the well-being of the people. Technical, adult and non-formal education plus special education are given prominence for the first time. This anticipates the large population of school leavers that the Universal Primary Education will produce.

The Teacher Education Program is very important to all levels already identified. The government realizes that there is no education system that can "rise above the quality of its teachers." The desire to produce "highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system"[15] is high in the minds of the government. All teachers at all levels are to be professionally trained. To this end, six types of teacher training institutions are going to give the required professional training. These are:

(i) Grade II Teachers' Colleges

(ii) Advanced Teachers' Colleges

---

[15] Ibid., p. 25.

(iii) Colleges of Education

(iv) Institutes of Education

(v) National Teachers' Institutes

(vi) Teachers' Centres[16]

Attendance in these training institutions will vary from six to twelve weeks at the workshops organized by Institutes and Teachers' Centres to three or five years at the Grade Two Teachers Colleges. For the first time, too, the curriculum will reflect the needs of the society in the teacher education programs.

On providing educational services, the government sees the objectives of educational services as including among others the development and improvement of educational programs; the promotion of in-service education; development and promotion of an effective use of innovative materials in schools. Finally, the government considers the success of any education system to depend on proper planning, efficient administration and financing. "Administration includes organization and structure, proprietorship and control, inspection and supervision."[17]

As has often been noted in studies of international education, the ministries of education in most developing nations are not the best agents to effect any change in the school system. The bureaucracy can be carried to the extreme. As Coombs has noted,

> The main features of these arrangements were cast during an earlier era when education and the world outside were moving slowly by today's pace, and when the size and diversity of education's tasks were much smaller. They were not designed for planning in today's sense of the term, or for implementing

---

[16] Ibid., p. 25

[17] Ibid., p. 31.

> such planning or for critical evaluation of the educational system's performance, or for a rigorous promotion of innovation.[18]

Coombs was referring to managerial arrangements typical of educational systems in many of the developing nations. His observation can be compared with that of Professor Babs Fafunwa who used to say to us in his class that a carpenter who uses the tools of yesterday to do today's job will be out of a job tomorrow.

The essence of all this is to say that if the government wants to achieve the desired success in the areas of administration, planning and financing education, it will be necessary to improve the existing system. The Ministries of education both at the Federal and State levels need reorganization. Sometimes one finds it is not the hierarchical structure that is not functioning, but the people who occupy the posts on the hierarchy. A lot of improvement is needed in the attitudes of the people who work in our establishments. The "I don't care" attitude must be purged out of many of us before we can get any positive results in our system. This is a big task in itself. To make the people have a positive attitude to public work needs a special type of education. The lack of a positive attitude to work must be costing the government millions of naira (one naira equals one dollar and fifty cents) per year in wastage.

Something must be done about this at the school level. We must inculcate in the minds of the young ones a positive attitude to work. Part of our problem in this area came from the early administrators who presented a wrong image of manual work through their appearances and

---

[18] Philip H. Coombs, The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 120.

behavior. Their dresses were not to be stained, and their hands were to remain clean twenty hours a day. Surely, the educated elites copied this attitude wrongly and we need to "deschool" our young generation from this unfortunate act.

In conclusion, one may say if all these laudable aims can be pursued with all sincerity and a sense of commitment on the part of the government by providing adequate financial supports, removing the bottlenecks that are of common feature in our administrative procedure, the nation of Nigeria shall be heading in the right direction. However, the people too must contribute their own quota. As Coombs has warned, "Educational aims cannot be implemented if educational leaders go in one direction while the students and parents go the other."[19]

Finally, we may take the last word of warning from William J. Platt in his "Vector Planning for the Development of Education"[20] that as soon as we get started in the right direction, en route we must have a checking system for making corrections wherever mistakes may occur.

If all that we have planned appears theoretical, we must strive to make it practical, adaptable and suitable to our needs. This we have failed to do in the past, hence we got mixed up in living in theories.

---

[19] Ibid., p. 100.

[20] William T. Platt, "Vector Planning for the Development of Education" in Education and Development Reconsidered, the Bellagio Conference Papers (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Coombs, Philip. The World Educational Crisis: A Systems Analysis. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Faure, Edgar, et al. Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow. UNESCO, 1972.

Hall, Edward T. The Silent Language. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959.

Hanson, John W., and Brembeck, Cole S. Education and the Development of Nations. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966.

Harbison, Frederick H. Human Resources as the Wealth of Nations. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Illich, Ivan. Deschooling Society. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971.

Investment in Education. The Report of the Commission on Post-School Certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria. Lagos: Federal Ministry of Education, 1960.

National Policy on Education. Lagos: Federal Republic of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Education, Printing Division, 1977.

Teachers College Record. Human Resources and International Development, Vol. 76, No. 4, May 1975.

Ward, F. Champion (ed.). Education and Development Reconsidered. New York: Praeger, 1974.